

MODERN RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES IN EGYPT

BY SHEIKH ALY ABDEL RAZEQ BEY,

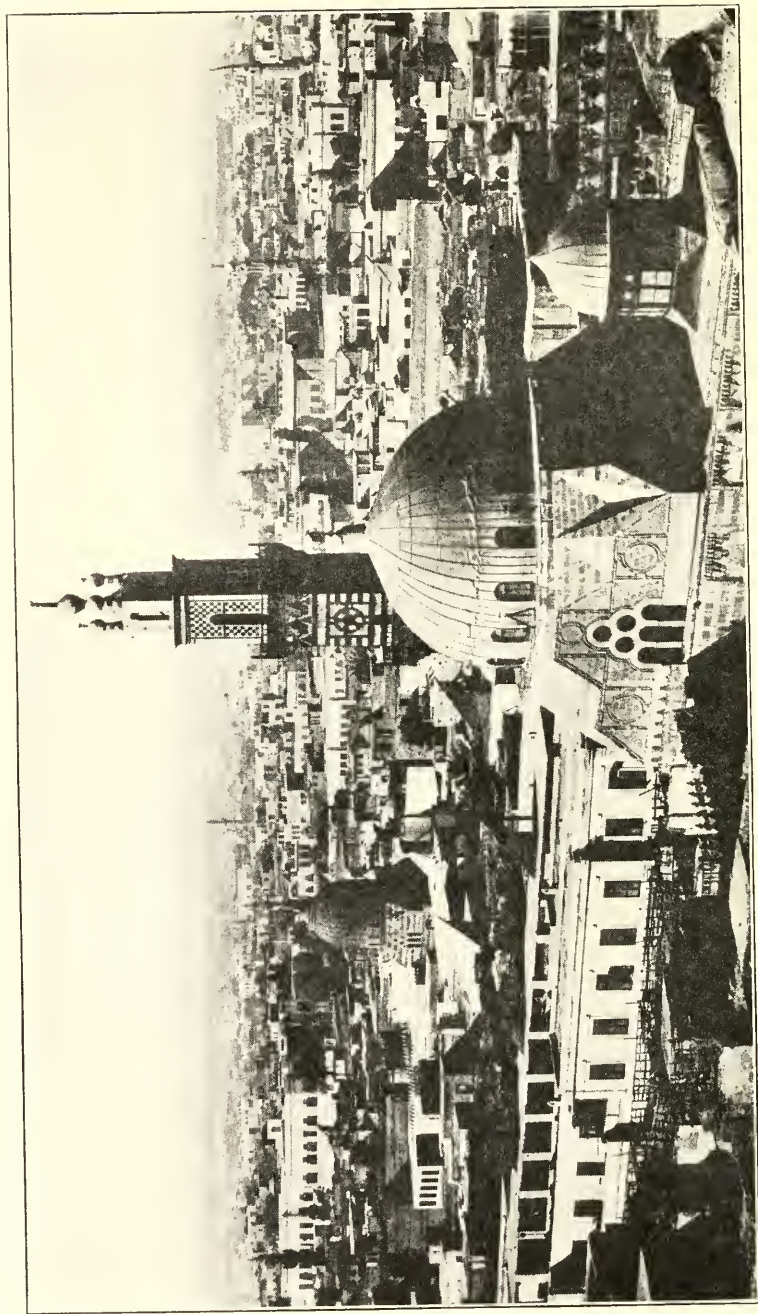
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THE name "Egypt" is derived from three ancient Egyptian words, "Ila," "Ka," "Ptah," which originally meant "The place of the abode of the spirit of the God of Wisdom 'Ptah.'" For at least two or three milleniums the wisdom was very largely confined to the priests and, consequently, kept within the circle of what was considered religious wisdom; hence also the word "hieroglyphic," the secret knowledge of the priests.

For the past thirteen hundred years, the wisdom of Egypt, its culture, and life have been very closely identified with, if not entirely moulded by, the religious system known to the world as "Islam." To a very remarkable degree, the religion founded by Mohammed made and continued its impress upon the intellectual and social, the individual and the national character, practically to the exclusion of any other large and vital influences. This religion and culture originated in Arabia and, in the earlier periods of Islam, extended westward as far as Southern France, eastward as far as India and even to China, northward as far as Russia, and southward throughout Africa. In some communities, however, it entered more vigorously into the life of individuals and groups than others; this was particularly true in those nations where the Arabic language became predominant, that is, in the Near East and across North Africa. Certain cities became identified as the centers of Islamic thought, particularly, Basra, Kufa, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo, and from these influences have radiated, both Islamic and Arabic, throughout these thirteen centuries. The entire history and literature of Islam has felt the force of the influence of these cities, through their schools, interpretations of religion, history, and literature.

Cairo is to Egypt what Paris is to France; but the throbbing life, the example and leadership of this very modern, as well as very ancient, city has extended quite beyond Egypt into other lands. Naturally, the Nile Valley has received first, and to a very much



A GENERAL VIEW OF CAIRO

greater degree than any other community, the predominating influence of Islamic Cairo. Whatever there was of pre-Islamic religious influence, whether pagan or Christian, to a very large degree gave way throughout the centuries to the penetration of Moslem thought. Egypt, by its very geographical position, was a buffer state, so to speak, between the East and the West. The Occidental considered the religion and culture of Islam as represented primarily by Egypt and Arabia; the Oriental regarded Cairo as one of the two main outposts of Islam in contact with the Western world—the other one being Constantinople.

Notwithstanding the predominating influence of Islam in Egypt, there has continued throughout the centuries a Christian community, known as the Coptic Church. In more recent times there have grown up very much smaller communities of Greeks, Armenians, Roman Catholics, Syrians and, within the past three-fourths of a century, a Protestant Christian community. But the Moslems represent about ninety per cent of the population; all the Christian communities together make up the remaining ten per cent, except for a very small percentage of Jews. In considering modern religious tendencies in Egypt, one must, therefore, keep primarily in mind these thirteen-fourteenths of the population since, for practical purposes, we may omit the very small communities other than the Coptic and Protestant communities, as they do not actively enter into the creation or the maintenance of religious currents in the nation.

The national religion of Egypt is Islam, as stated in the present Constitution. This does not mean that Christians are not admitted to citizenship. On the contrary, in the National Parliament and in the King's Cabinet there are Christians and, in the former, that is in the Parliament, there are even two or three Jews. This in itself is an indication of the tendency toward a recognition of other religions in an Islamic state.

Whatever may be said with reference to changes or currents in the religious mind of the nation with reference to the Moslems, finds its counterpart in the Christian community. At the head of the Islamic community stands the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar; at the head of the Coptic community, stands the Patriarch. Both of these symbolize extreme conservatism; both occupy positions of guardianship over traditional religion; both maintain a very great influence within their own religious communities; the Patriarch's community naturally is only a fraction numerically as compared

with that of the Grand Sheikh. The Sheikh of al-Azhar, however, bears no authority as a spiritual head, as does the Patriarch; he is not officially "Sheikh al Islam." The Protestant Christian community while small in number is very active, but has not the leadership of one man; it is marked by a lesser tendency to conservatism and a greater tendency to what is suggested by its name in the history of the last four hundred years.

In considering present religious tendencies, it will be helpful to consider theological currents before passing on to a discussion of religious practice. Remembering their very large and predominating position in Egypt, we may begin with the Moslems. Among these there are manifested two very distinct communities, the "conservatives" and the "modernists." Egypt has been passing through such a decided transition since the days of Mohammed Ali, a hundred years ago, and especially within the last three decades, that the two camps, the conservatives and the modernists, are distinctly recognizable. Conservatism finds its greatest advocates in the *ulama* (singular *alim*, scholar) of al-Azhar, that institution of traditional orthodox Islam founded a thousand years ago at Cairo. The *ulama* are often known as "Sheikhs," as distinguished from the less conservative "Effendis," the more or less Europeanized citizens. They are largely of the Maliki school of orthodox, although there are some of the Shafi'i, Hanafi or Hanbali schools. Other communities in the Islamic world would probably claim to be equally as orthodox and conservative as the *ulama* of Cairo and Egypt, if not even more so; for example, Meccans and Wabhabees, those of Southern Arabia, and perhaps cities in North Africa or Afghanistan. But Cairo and al-Azhar have maintained for centuries a prestige for Islamic religion and culture. Here foreign languages and literature, the history and literature of non-Islamic peoples, except in so far as they have come into orthodox Moslem writings, the sciences, inventions, and general culture of other nations have been excluded. No non-Moslem, not even a Shi'ite "heretic" Moslem, has ever been admitted to al-Azhar as student or instructor, except in cases where he has carefully concealed his views. The whole tendency and attitude has been that of isolation from pagan, Christian, or Jewish thought, and the defense of the faith laid down in the earlier centuries of Islam, based upon the Koran and the traditions of Mohammed, its founder.

The *ulama* have maintained the position of guardianship over

orthodox Islam. However, even they have been profoundly influenced by the movement originated about thirty years ago through the late Sheikh Mohammed Abdou, who at that time was Sheikh of al-Azhar. No one, and least of all himself would venture the opinion that he was anything but conservative. He was, however, a man of most vigorous mind and splendid character and, as it were, the first to recognize the absolute necessity of study of present-day conditions with a view to the proper relations between them and orthodox Islam. He has been called a pioneer in modern Islamic thought and is regarded as the leader of quite a number, even within the conservative group, who would suggest no essential changes in the approach of Islam to modern life; and he is regarded with reverence and profound respect by these and many who have more or less withdrawn from the older conservatism of the past centuries.

There has been a considerable amount of contact of the conservative *alim* with other than strictly conservative Islam. Politically and socially, even economically, conservatism has been feeling the touch of outside influences within the past century, as it has not for a thousand years. When the Khedive Ismail fifty years ago said, "My country is a part of Europe and not a part of Africa," this was indicative of the exposure of orthodox Mohammedan thought to other influences than its own; even the conservative Moslem could not deny this.

The conservative Christians, whose ecclesiastical head was, and is, the Patriarch, have held to the traditional and orthodox faith of the Christian religion which had been handed down to them according to tradition since the days of St. Mark and the founding of the Christian Church in Egypt. The various councils of the Church had covered authoritatively and finally, as far as they were concerned, all questions of doctrine or worship or ecclesiastical influence. The attitudes of the Christian Egyptian were, and are, those of the conservative Moslem, except that he did not look to the Koran and the traditions or the *ulama* for authority, but rather to the succession of patriarchs or the councils of the church. He, too, has ever maintained an attitude of religious isolation, insulation, and separation; but he, too, has been conscious of the impact of other thinking upon his religious life; so that the conservative Copt is largely represented by the priest, or bishop, or indifferent member of the community. Also within the Protestant Christian circle there are conservatives, who prefer to take their stand strictly upon a

fixed scripture and the knowledge of its content, and to whom in many cases this is sufficient for every question of human life.

There is very little contact between these three conservative communities. Naturally, each one looks upon the other as far removed from the truth and its application to human living. Each is suspicious of the influence of the other; but the position and prestige of the conservative Moslem, of course makes his influence far greater than either of the other very much smaller communities.

On the other hand, there are Moslems who may be described as "modernists." During the past generation or two, these have come forward in rather large numbers. They have given rise to a number of questionings, if not whirlwinds of religious struggle, in their departure from orthodox and conservative theology. They have been brought in contact, in various ways, with the literature and culture and life, with the destructive and constructive elements, in other religious communities than their own. Some of these modernists would insist upon a partial divorce or separation between the fields of religion and science; that is, they would not have religious dogma or tradition dominate a full and frank consideration of scientific phenomena, yet they would not ask for the exclusion of religious considerations from their own thinking or that of others. To be sure, in some cases there are leaders who are frankly opposed to any religious thought or confession whatever, but the majority would maintain an allegiance to their own religion, however much they might recognize the value of scientific inquiry. Another group of Moslems would separate religion and politics, that is, they would deny the authority of religious leaders in matters of the state, just as they would deny the authority of politics in the realm of religion. They insist that the state and nation may exist without being an integral part of any religious system, and that a religious system may exist in and with, but not as a part of, the state. This group is full of the spirit of inquiry. Its members are ready to ask, "What is religion? How far is it a spiritual and personal matter rather than one of controlling the investigation of science or of guiding one's relations as a citizen?" They are intent upon the adaptation of science, religion, and politics to the life of the individual or of the community. They have their eyes open for change and reform, in so far as these may appear rational and profitable, but without necessarily trespassing upon the fundamental elements of faith and religion. They would, in the majority of cases, in-



AL-AZHAR MOSQUE AND UNIVERSITY

sist that these changes or adaptations do not seriously affect the faith, the spirit, or the creed of Islam. They would declare that these are superficial only and that they are not serious or contrary to the creed and spirit of their religion. They would declare that deep religious feeling is still essential, but that it must not be subject to dogma, traditionalism, or the religious customs of their fathers.

Notable among these currents are the "reforms" in the Azhar University, which has been the intellectual and religious center of Islam in the Near East for centuries. Here we find the introduction, in quite recent years, of a new curriculum including four years of primary and five years of secondary study like that of the Egyptian Government schools, except that instead of foreign languages there is an increased amount of the Arabic language and training in Islam. Beyond this there is appointed four years of professional training for teaching, for service in the Moslem sacred law courts and in advanced Islamic culture. Still beyond this are prescribed three years of specialized or graduate study qualifying for distinguished Islamic leadership.

The venerable Azhar mosque is to be maintained as a place of prayer and worship only, and around it is to be built up a large and modern equipment and facilities, library, etc. Branch schools of the Azhar have been established in some eight other centers in Egypt, where instruction in the first nine years of the sixteen-year course is conducted. The Koran and the traditions are maintained as the most essential part of this curriculum, but it is frankly stated that in order to secure a more or less marketable education, the Egyptian young man must receive instruction in modern subjects, other than what have been regarded as all-sufficient in the study of the Arabic language and Mohanmedan religion. This movement has been welcomed by a great body of the younger students of al-Azhar and its allied schools. They are ready to face frankly the demands of comparative study of the religions tenets and influences of Islam, and place themselves in contact with non-orthodox Islamic thought, and even with non-Islamic literature and movements of every kind. It is contemplated that in the near future there will be included a knowledge of one or more foreign languages, also, in the whole curriculum of educational institutions conducted under the Moslem Benevolent Endowments, which will in itself be a striking innovation in Islam.

Another indication of the present liberal tendency is the frank discussion of delicate religious questions in the Arabic press and in periodical literature in Cairo. Another is the current discussion of the rights of the Califate. Yet another is the question of the prestige of the Moslem *shari'a*, or sacred law, which has been until modern times the one criterion for jurisprudence.

In the Christian community, there is the same evident tendency toward modern, as compared with traditional, thinking. The authority of the Patriarch has been challenged by a growing sentiment among the laity. The observance of the forms of worship and the maintenance of orthodox church life, even in matters of doctrine, are feeling the impact of questionings, of discoveries, either out of the Scriptures directly or otherwise. In addition to formal church worship, there has been introduced a very large amount of preaching and the organization of numerous groups for discussion and consideration of spiritual values at which orthodoxy looks askance. Sunday Schools, religious literature, new customs within the church, and the like, are radically changing Christian life.

There has been some evidence, both in the Moslem and Christian communities, of the influence of atheistic literature from outside. Much of what the modernist regards as sound and wise is looked upon by the orthodox as dangerous and atheistic. Efforts have been made by both religious communities to prevent the spread of such real departures from the faith. Indeed, some three years ago the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, the Coptic Patriarch, and the Grand Rabbi of the Jews joined in contributing articles to a symposium in a leading Arabic periodical in Cairo, calling the attention of the public to the dangers of irreligion in the country. Meanwhile, some of the leading editors of Cairo have stood as defenders of the orthodox faith, both in their editorials and in the contributions to their newspapers, while at the same time they have frequently been condemned themselves as being heretical and even atheistic. Even in the National Parliament there has been a voice raised on behalf of the national religion, Islam, and of unity and orthodoxy on the parts of the Christian Church, that is, the Coptic.

In any case, whether through the increase of literacy in both communities or the tendency toward philosophy in the higher schools and State University, or more general access to the knowledge of the content of the Koran and Christian scriptures, or Arabic or foreign religious questions, there is no doubt that there has been a



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THE NILE AT MODERN CAIRO

shift of emphasis on the part of the leaders of thought. Political currents have entered into this stream of thought, and the work of foreign missionaries has been conducive, not necessarily to radical changes, but at least to discussions and consequent changes in the religious character and customs of the people, whether Moslem or Christian. In many cases, these influences may be superficial; without doubt, in some cases they are profound and far-reaching in their consequences. The spirit of inquiry, the spirit of freedom, the demand for independence of thought, are not confined, as many supposed a few years ago, to political considerations. Rather they leap over the boundaries of political and enter into the field of religious and social and other life, in a way which cannot be prevented by authority or dogma. The present tendencies point to an increase of this spirit of inquiry and adaptation and recasting of the religious thinking of the nation.

It is manifest, from what has been observed, that today among the Egyptian Moslem and Christian leaders of thought, there is a force which seems to drive conservative thinkers into an ultra-conservative position and others into a more liberal position. In the

"no-man's-land" between these, there is a group, rather large in numbers, who incline to rationalize religious beliefs and to find some process by which they may make religious beliefs, old and new, fit into changing conditions. The reinterpretation of theology is face to face with demands which give a new color to the faith of former generations. Egypt's geographical position between the Occident and the Orient symbolizes this profound religious struggle which is going on within and which is deeply affecting the life of the nation.

Over against the theological tendencies, which have been appearing in recent years in the Nile Valley, there are the changes and tendencies which are even more striking in the religious practice of both the Moslem and the Christian communities. Here again we must recall that the Moslem community is some ninety per cent of the total population, so that these changes are more conspicuous both to the casual observer and to the student of the problem than they are in the smaller Christian community. In a recent public address in Cairo it was noted, for example, that there has been a departure from the standards of conduct in the cities in such matters as attendance at the cafés and theaters. A generation or two ago it was entirely taboo for any of the twelve thousand students of al-Azhar even to be seen at a café or a theater; even Shepheard's Hotel was referred to as a drinking place. Dancing, participating in music, vocal or instrumental, phonograph, radio, attendance at the cinema and such public amusements have entered into the common life of the people within the past two or three decades to such a degree as would have completely shocked the "religious" individual a generation ago.

In the villages the changes are not by any means as great. The evolution has been slower. Nevertheless, wherever one goes one finds indications of this change in former standards of decorum. There is no longer a quick and general response to the call of the *muezzin* from the minarets of the mosques to the daily prayers. The religious fasts and feasts have not been observed as carefully in recent years. There is not the same respect and prestige of religious leaders, whose authority was almost absolute for centuries. Superstitions are regarded and observed far less than formerly, although there is a very large residuum of those which have persisted through the centuries. In the mosques, as well as in Christian churches, the clocks show the time of day as from midnight for twelve hours

repeated rather than from sunrise to sunset; that is, the Occidental method of time reckoning obtains rather than the Oriental. There is also a very much increased observance of the western calendar for the year instead of the Moslem or Coptic, although often and in all official documents both the Christian and the Moslem dates are placed side by side. There has been considerable discussion of the wisdom of deciding and announcing Moslem religious feasts and fasts on the basis of mathematical and astronomical calculations rather than upon the testimony of two witnesses as to the appearance of the new moon for the Moslem lunar calendar.

The question of the wearing of the hat rather than the Oriental head-gear has threatened to divide Moslems into two camps. The whole problem of marriage, monogamy versus polygamy, the question of divorce, age of consent, rights and status of minors, have felt the impact of these present-day influences. The *wakfs*, or Mohammedan and Coptic benevolent endowments, have been made a subject of vigorous scrutiny and very largely taken over by the Government. The Egyptian Minister of Wakfs, however, deals only with Mohammedan *wakfs*, which are for the support of the mosques and schools and benevolent institutions under its authority. There has been some question of the wisdom of translating the Koran into other than the Arabic language; but thus far it has not been done in Egypt. And technically, translations of the Koran are not to be admitted by the Customs authorities.

The tendency toward an education of both young men and young women outside of the circles of orthodox Islamic teaching has greatly increased, so that we find in the quite modern government and private schools multitudes whose education is decidedly Occidental; this is true from the kindergarten and primary schools right through secondary and professional schools to the Egyptian University; the students of all these schools very frequently have practically no knowledge of the fundamentals of their religious beliefs, whether Moslem or Christian. It must be said, however, that there has been a very mild effort to retain in the government schools some instruction in the tenets of their religion for the students of both faiths; but it is generally a very superficial instruction when compared with the very inclusive religious instruction which prevailed for centuries.

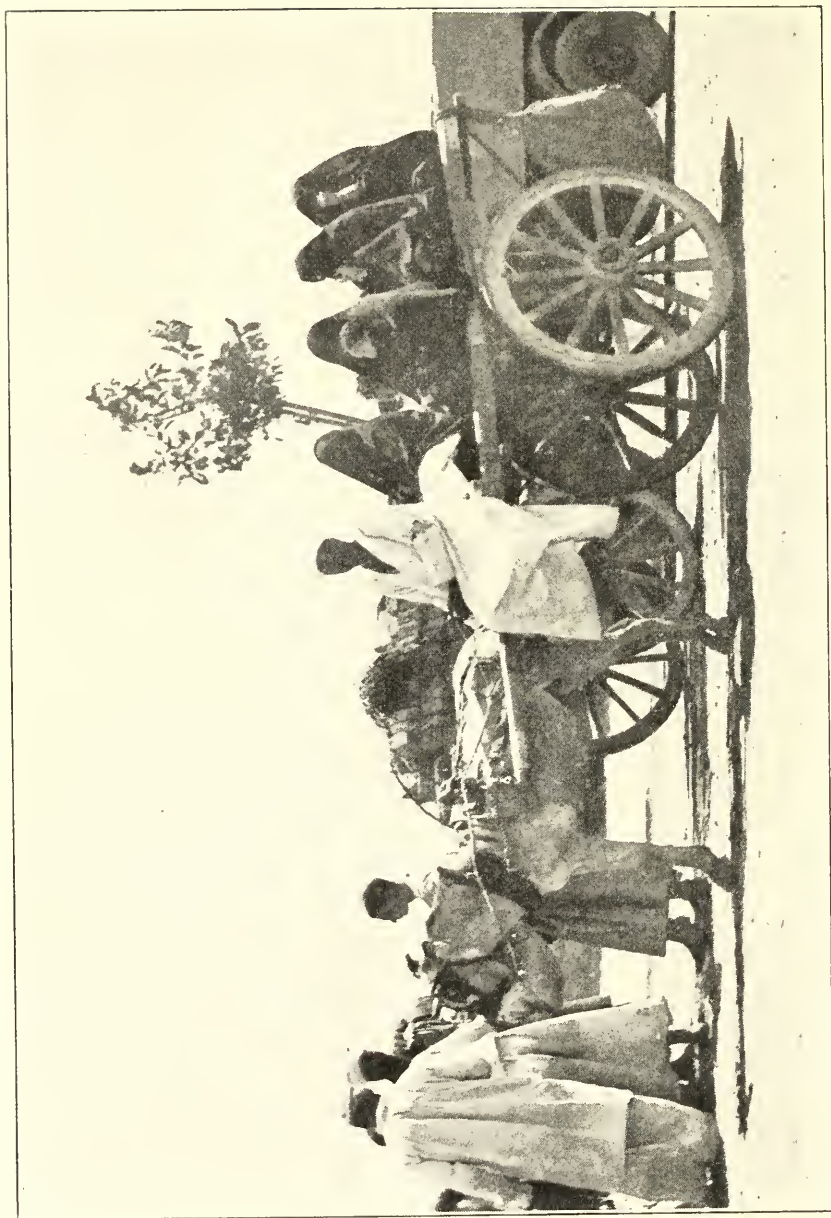
Another distinct reaction of the modern influences on the life of the nation is the present position of the *shari'a*, the sacred Moham-

medan law, in the ordinary judicial processes of the country. For a thousand years or more, the *shari'a* was the one law of the nation, except that for the foreigner, with his capitulations, or the Christian or Jew, with his special codes for matters of personal status, some provision was made outside of the *shari'a* on the ground that he was not amenable to it. During the past century, the influence of European, and especially French, law increased until in the seventies the Khedive Ismail established the modern courts on the basis of the Code of Napoleon. These have jurisdiction over all Egyptians without consideration of creed, except in the matters of personal status, marriage, minors, estates, etc.

The new Constitution of Egypt declares that Islam is the religion of the State. It also declares that there shall be religious liberty in Egypt. The interpretation and application of these two items of the Constitution are giving rise to considerable discussion already. It is universally admitted that the application of the *shari'a* with its interpretation of *fikh* (theology), does not seem entirely possible in the present state of Egyptian culture and thought. For example, the thief does not have his right hand cut off; the non-faithful wife is not stoned to death; many Moslems take interest on their deposits with banks or individuals without being subject to punishment by the Moslem orthodox law; and many conscientious Moslems do loan money for interest. Even the Government itself has a postal savings bank, and many Moslems are identified with other banks and financial institutions in which interest is an important consideration. The question of insurance has come into the thought of the public only in recent years, and the ethics of it gave rise to considerable discussion.

The interest in the pilgrimage to Mecca seems to have decreased to a very large extent. This may be due to questions of administration and control which have arisen between the Egyptian Government and that of the sacred territories in Arabia out of matters pertaining to sanitation, police duties, and similar matters. Quite recently, the decrease is certainly due to financial stress. But in any case the annual tribute of the Egyptian Government of immensely valuable gifts of money, grain, silks, gold, and silver, to the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina has ceased.

In the matter of women, Egypt is apparently proceeding cautiously and slowly. It is true that there has been a very manifest change in the appearance of women in public, their demand for recognition



PEASANT WOMEN ARE STILL CONSERVATIVE

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and rights, their manner of dress, their questions of marriage, travel, and general liberty. Not all have snatched off the veil, as has been the case in Turkey, and yet the younger generation are appearing in the schools in large numbers, and the older ones answering in places of adult education, amusement and social life far more often than formerly. The Egyptian Government, some two years ago, established a course of lectures for women only, covering most topics of interest and profit: but this was discontinued after one year, apparently for lack of enthusiastic support.

Kasim Amin Bey, some twenty years or more ago, issued a book on the rights of women and measured many of his considerations by Islam itself. This was the beginning of a rather vigorous feminist movement, and there exists a national organization of women, under the leadership of Mme. Huda Sharawi, who has represented this organization in international feminist movement conferences in London, Berlin, and America.

Within the Christian community, there has been a much more obvious and rapid movement toward a change in social life. This may be due somewhat to the closer connection between the Christian manner of life in Europe and the requirements of even a conservative Christian community in Egypt. Nevertheless, the Coptic church and the Protestant church in Egypt show striking indications at times of a desire to maintain the traditional manner of life along with this departure from the religious requirements of the extreme orthodox leaders. The Coptic church has been well nigh split by the demand of the laymen for more authority through its *majlis*, or church assembly, versus the authority of the Patriarch. The demand has been made that the church court should control the properties and secular appointments of the church, and leave to the clergy the spiritual interests of the community; even in this latter very considerable changes are demanded in the direction of spiritual provision for the people, the education of the clergy, and the like.

The Protestant church has grown to a community of some sixty or seventy thousand, extending from Alexandria to the Sudan. It is marked by a very extraordinary standard of literacy, an intelligent clergy, and zeal in the enlightenment and education of all, both in secular and religious instruction, in its schools and churches, both in the cities and villages. It has also the distinguishing mark of emphasizing the extension of the distribution of Bibles in any

language throughout the country. With its more than one hundred ordained clergy, all of whom are graduates of secondary schools or colleges, it constitutes a vigorous and far-reaching influence.

Perhaps the two greatest influences which are producing these modern religious tendencies are the newspapers and travel. The periodicals, whether daily, weekly, or monthly, provide a forum which, with the present Press Law, give a very remarkable freedom for the discussion of any of these questions. While it is illegal to publish any attack or vilification of any religion or its founder, there is still open a very large field for the consideration of problems directly connected with either theology, religious practices, or the social conditions arising in modern times. At times these discussions have impinged so sharply upon religious sensitiveness that they have given rise to real friction within the circles of the religious communities and of the Government. They have been made the object of attacks in the National Parliament, where the extremely orthodox of either religion and the extremely liberal have clashed. It is proposed by some that the Government should undertake a very strict censorship and establish laws controlling any religious activity in Egypt, with the example of Turkey in this matter before them. At this point the statements of the Constitution relative to Islam being the religion of the State and the guaranteeing of religious liberty rise up as problems for interpretation along with the purpose of the nation to be second to none in its standing internationally.

The matter of travel and acquaintance with other than Egyptian traditional thought is affecting the families which make up the nation. Frequently whole families are off to Europe together. Families in the provinces come, in increasing numbers, into the cities through the facilities of railways, automobiles, river traffic, to very large expositions for greater publicity has been given to matters of industrial and agricultural welfare. From the attraction of tens of thousands who visit the city of Cairo and come into contact with the exhibits and with each other, a new spirit of inquiry has been awakened. The wealth in Egypt which followed the War produced remarkable changes in the social life of the people. Inevitably these changes had considerable effect on religious attitudes, as the latter have, in turn, on social tendencies.

Politically, there is certainly some relationship between the conditions within the country and its currents of religious thought.

Since the abolition of the Califate at Constantinople, to which Egypt, as a part of the Moslem world, was responsible, the question has arisen where the Califate should be centered, if and when it should be again established. Cairo has been mentioned for a place in such considerations. One difficulty has arisen in that, by the custom of Islam, the Calif should be a ruler of an entirely independent Moslem state, competent to maintain and safeguard the interests of itself and other Moslem states.

For fifty years Egypt has been a sphere of influence and part of that time a protectorate under a non-Moslem power, England. It gives rise to a real question as to whether the modern religious tendencies would make it possible for the ruler of Egypt to be the Calif or whether the Califate should be established elsewhere. In any case, the political and the religious problems of Egypt seem to be closely interwoven, so much so that one does not know what direction some of these currents may take in the near future.

If the question arises as to what the trends, the possibilities, the dangers, and the values of these considerations are, then it is only fair to say that in the minds of many these changes are not serious, that the religious spirit, the creeds and the prestige of either Islam or Christianity are maintained as thoroughly as ever. There is a quick religious response in defence of religious faith on the part of both the Moslem and Christian communities. The former is, and always has been, a very thorough religious community, measured by the standards of the whole system of Islam; the latter has maintained its existence for nearly two thousand years in the face of overwhelming numbers of non-Christians. Both communities would claim allegiance to their faith and would in the majority of cases maintain that the fundamentals still stand, whatever changes may be manifest in the social and even in the semi-religious life of the nation. They would claim that character is weak but not faith; they would claim that the deep religious feeling is sufficient to maintain and safeguard the religion of their faiths. And yet, there do exist conditions which indicate some serious rifts in religious thinking. There does exist enough evidence to indicate to many that these changes are more than superficial, and that they threaten the nation with atheism, or at least agnosticism and scepticism. Certainly the trend is strongly in the direction of freedom of thought.

The difficulty at present is that if one makes bold to express

some freedom of thought, especially through the printed page, he is liable to be made the object of attack, by either the Moslem or the Christian community, as being a dangerous citizen, a corrupter of religion, and as having forfeited his rights as a citizen. Religion, science, politics, social life, national life, even the economic life of the nation are offering today conflicting currents which in both force and character are creating a new life for the nation. It seems probable that the challenge of orthodoxy or heterodoxy is liable to be thrown down at any time, and nothing so influences the direction which things will take as a deep-seated religious mind of a nation.

Cairo, as has been said, forms the center of authority and influence for the nation; and Cairo has in its heart al-Azhar, which itself seems ready for at least some change while maintaining its faith in Islam. The Christian church of Egypt has passed through its time of martyrdom, especially in the days of the Roman Empire. Both communities retain profound religious convictions, probably much more than would be found in other nations. If the present religious tendencies in Egypt are moving in any one direction, as they certainly are, it is going to mean changes which cannot be measured today, but which are unquestionably vital.

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